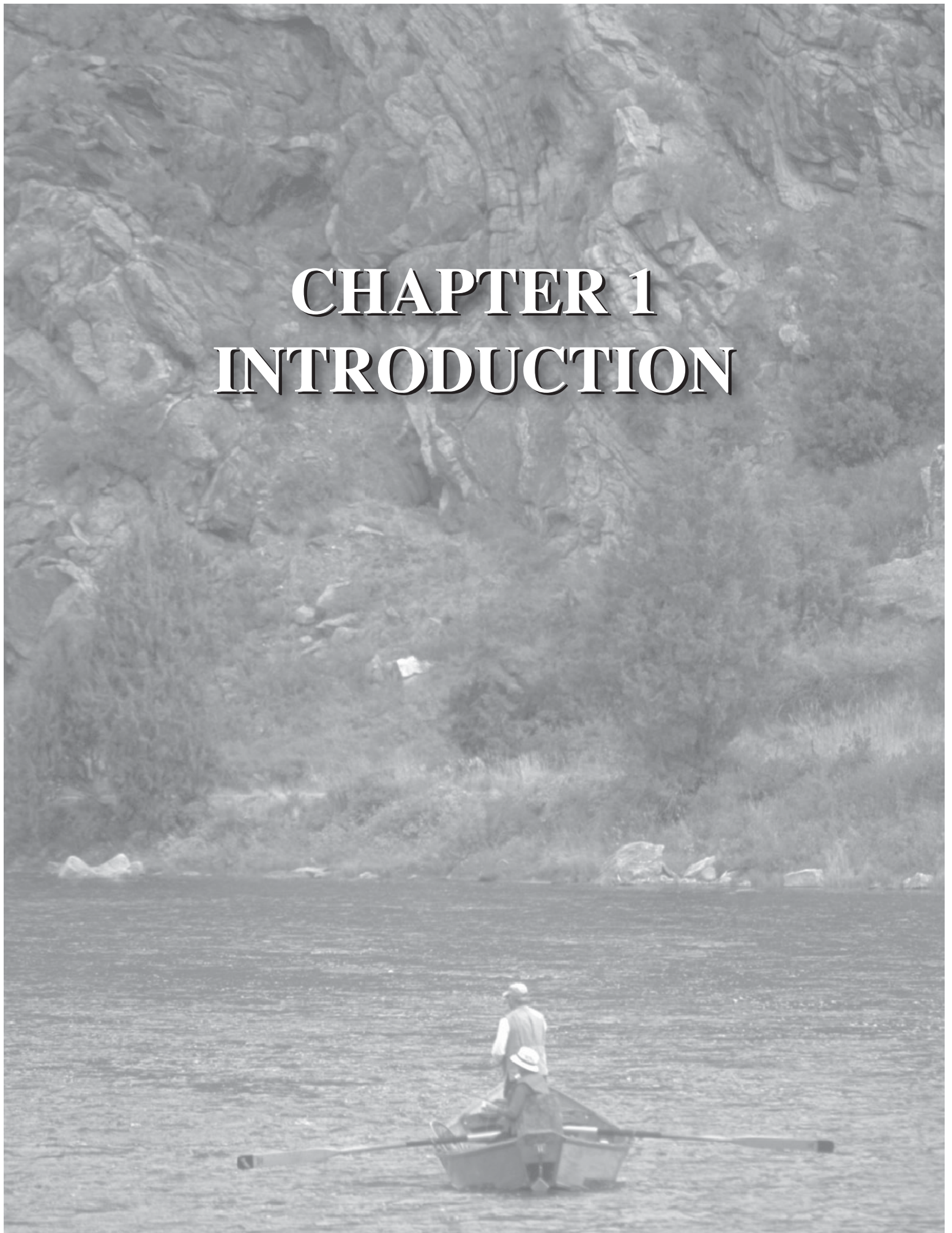


# CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION



## HOW TO READ THIS CHAPTER

This chapter contains background information on the planning process and sets the stage for the information that is presented in the rest of the document. There are nine main sections in Chapter 1 including:

- Background
- Purpose and Need for the Plan
- Planning Area Description
- Planning Process
- Scoping and Issues
- Planning Criteria and Legislative Constraints
- Related Plans
- Collaboration
- Overall Vision

The identification of issues in the *Scoping and Issues* section is especially critical to the entire planning process as these major issues become the main drivers in the formulation of alternative management scenarios presented for consideration.

## BACKGROUND

On August 9, 2001, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) issued a Notice of Intent in the Federal Register to prepare a Resource Management Plan (RMP) and associated Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for public lands administered by the Dillon Field Office (DFO). As defined by the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, as amended, the “public lands” are those federally owned lands and interests in lands (for example, federally owned mineral estate) that are administered by the Secretary of the Interior, specifically through the BLM.

The approved RMP will meet the BLM statutory requirement for a master land use plan as mandated by Section 202 of FLPMA, which specifies the need for a comprehensive land use plan consistent with multiple-use and sustained yield objectives. The RMP/EIS also fulfills requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, to disclose and address environmental impacts of proposed major federal actions through a process that includes public participation and cooperation with other agencies.

BLM is the lead agency in preparing the RMP/EIS. Beaverhead County has been a cooperating agency in this effort as a local government with special expertise since October 2000. Madison County became a cooperating agency in November 2002. The BLM is also coordinating

closely with the U.S. Department of Interior (USDI) Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Agricultural Research Service (ARS) in this effort, since the BLM manages federal mineral estate beneath lands under their jurisdiction in the planning area.

## PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PLAN

Through completion of an RMP/EIS, the BLM proposes to provide a single, comprehensive land use plan that will guide management of the public lands and interests administered by the DFO over the next 15-20 years.

Current management of these public lands is guided by the Dillon Management Framework Plan (MFP) (USDI-BLM 1979). The MFP has been formally amended three times, and the need for a fourth amendment had been identified in the late 1990s for oil and gas leasing. Since its approval, many new laws, regulations, and policies have created additional considerations that affect the management of public lands. As a result, some of the decisions in the MFP are no longer valid, or have been superseded by requirements that did not exist when the MFP was prepared. Coupled with new issues and concerns and increasing demands on certain resources in the planning area, these changes in management policy drive the need for an inclusive, comprehensive plan that provides clear direction to both BLM and the public.

See the *Planning Process* section for a description of BLM’s land use planning process.

## PLANNING AREA DESCRIPTION

### BLM ORGANIZATION IN THE MONTANA/DAKOTAS

In the late 1990s, the BLM removed the middle layer (the District Office) from its management structure. As a result, the Dillon Resource Area, which had reported to the Butte District, was renamed the Dillon Field Office and reports directly to the Montana/Dakotas State Office. The managers in each of the field offices are referred to as Field Managers and make most of the decisions on the management of public lands under their jurisdiction. As specified under FLPMA, land use plans are approved by the State Director based on recommendations of the Field Manager.

## LAND OWNERSHIP AND ADMINISTRATION IN THE PLANNING AREA

The DFO is responsible for managing all public lands in Beaverhead and Madison Counties, with the exception of approximately 12,380 acres of public land in Beaverhead County along the Big Hole River managed by the Butte Field Office.

The Dillon RMP planning area includes varied and intermingled land surface ownerships and mineral ownerships as summarized on **Tables 1 and 2**.

Decisions in the RMP/EIS will apply to just over 900,000 acres of public land surface estate and 1.3 million acres of federal subsurface mineral estate. This includes:

- all surface estate administered by the BLM's Dillon Field Office
- federal mineral resources managed by the BLM beneath private or State surface estate
- federal mineral estate lying beneath lands administered by the Bureau of Reclamation
- federal mineral estate lying beneath lands administered by the Agricultural Research Service

The RMP/EIS will not make decisions for the surface or mineral estates of land administered by the BLM Butte Field Office or the USDA Forest Service, or for private or State-owned lands and minerals.

**Table 1**  
**Surface Ownership/Administration of Lands in Beaverhead and Madison Counties**

<i>Ownership/Administration</i>	<i>Beaverhead County</i>		<i>Madison County</i>	
	<i>Acres</i>	<i>Percent*</i>	<i>Acres</i>	<i>Percent*</i>
BLM Dillon Field Office	651,775	18%	249,451	11%
BLM Butte Field Office	12,380	<1%	0	0
U.S. Forest Service	1,374,051	39%	806,362	35%
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	39,231	1%	167	<1%
U.S. National Park Service	675	<1%	0	0
U.S. Agricultural Research Service	15,509	<1%	0	0
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation	4,749	<1%	0	0
State of Montana—FWP	28,845	<1%	24,841	1%
State of Montana—DNRC	324,902	9%	127,282	5%
Private	1,076,288	30%	1,086,690	47%
Other	16,755	<1%	8,707	<1%
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>3,545,160</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>2,303,500</b>	<b>100%</b>

\*Percentages rounded to nearest one percent.

**Table 2**  
**Federal Minerals within the Dillon Field Office included in RMP Decisions**

<i>Type of Jurisdiction</i>	<i>Beaverhead County</i>	<i>Madison County</i>	<i>Total Acres</i>
BLM Surface and Federal Minerals	644,036	249,740	893,776
Private and State Surface and Federal Minerals	276,535	167,605	444,140
BOR Surface and Federal Minerals	1,304	0	1,304
ARS Surface and Federal Minerals	15,490	0	15,490
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>937,365</b>	<b>417,345</b>	<b>1,354,710</b>



**Map 1 (oversized)** shows the location of the planning area within the State of Montana and depicts the extent of federal surface and subsurface lands within Beaverhead and Madison Counties that will be covered by RMP decisions.

## GEOGRAPHIC AND SOCIAL SETTING

The planning area lies in the extreme southwest corner of Montana, bounded on the south and west by the State of Idaho and the Continental Divide. The area is very rural in nature, with small communities scattered throughout Beaverhead and Madison counties. Census data from 2000 shows Beaverhead County with a total population of 9,202 and Madison County with a total population of 6,851. The larger communities of Butte (population 33,892) and Bozeman (population 27,509) are located to the north and east of the planning area. Interstate 15 provides a major north-south travel route through the planning area, while Interstate 90 lies just north of the planning area, providing an east-west travel route. See the *Economic* and *Social* discussion under the *Social and Economic Conditions* section in Chapter 3 of this document for additional area characterizations.

The majority of the planning area lies within the Beaverhead Mountains section of the Middle Rocky Mountains province as described by Bailey (Nesser et al. 1997). Elevations range from 4,500 feet to 11,154 feet, with several distinct mountain ranges spanning the planning area. These include the Beaverhead Mountains, the Blacktails, the Centennials, the Tendoy, the Gravellys, the Pioneers, the Rubys, the Madison, the Tobacco Roots, and the Highlands.

The area experiences a continental climate of cold, relatively dry winters and warm dry summers. This type of cool dry climate gives rise to sagebrush-grassland communities in the valleys and forests at higher elevations. The average annual precipitation varies from 50 inches in the Pioneer Mountains to 8 inches in some of the drier valley areas. Most of the planning area receives 8 to 16 inches, with most precipitation coming in May and June. Springs that are considered the uppermost headwaters of the entire Missouri River drainage are located on BLM lands administered by the DFO. The renowned Beaverhead, Big Hole, and Madison Rivers drain the planning area.

## PLANNING PROCESS

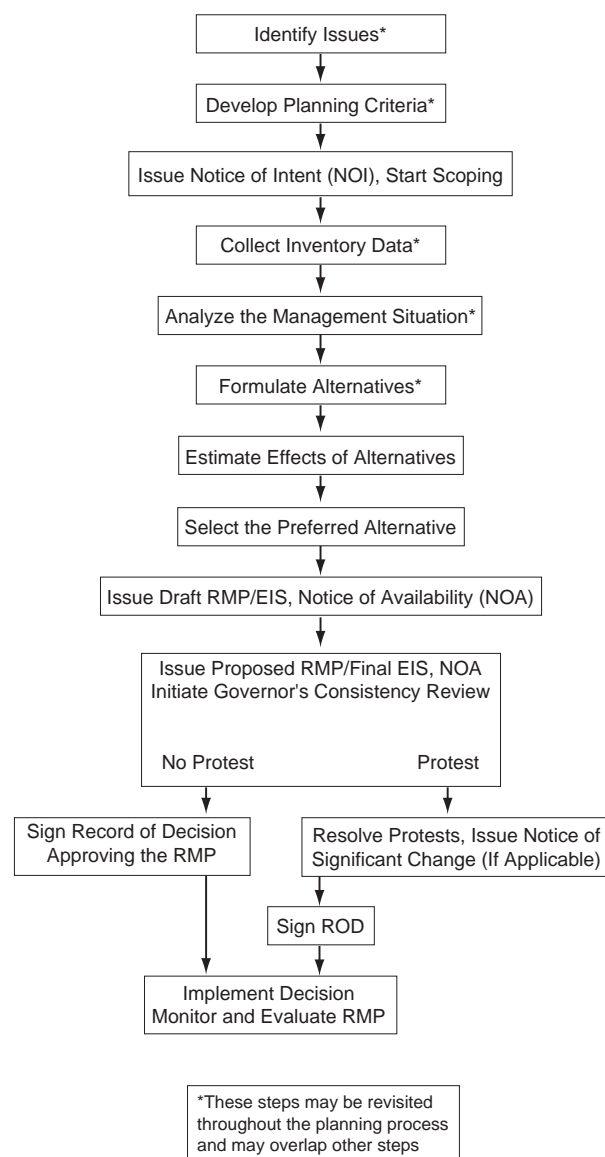
A Resource Management Plan (RMP) is the master land use plan that guides the management of public lands in a particular area or administrative unit. RMPs are usually prepared to cover the lands administered by a certain field of-

fice. An approved RMP establishes in a written document the following items:

- Resource condition goals and objectives
- Allowable resource uses and related levels of production or use to be maintained
- Land areas to be managed for limited, restricted, or exclusive resource uses or for transfer from BLM administration
- Program constraints and general management practices and protocols
- General implementation schedule or sequences
- Intervals and standards for monitoring the plan

Preparation of an RMP involves nine interrelated steps as illustrated in **Figure 1** and described in **Table 3**.

**Figure 1**  
**BLM Planning Process**



**Table 3**  
**Steps in the BLM Land Use Planning Process**

Step 1 Identification of Issues	This planning step is designed to identify major problems, concerns, or opportunities associated with the management of public land in the planning area. Issues are identified by the public, the BLM, and other governmental entities. The planning process is then focused on resolving the planning issues.
Step 2 Development of Planning Criteria	Planning criteria are identified to guide development of the RMP and prevent the collection of unnecessary information and data.
Step 3 Collect And Compile Inventory Data	This planning step involves the collation and collection of various kinds of environmental, social, economic, resource, and institutional data. In most cases, this process is limited to information needed to address the issues. The data required for land use planning decisions is usually at a broader scale than data required in implementation level planning and analyses.
Step 4 Analysis of the Management Situation	This step calls for the deliberate assessment of the current situation. It identifies the way lands and activities are currently managed in the planning area, describes conditions and trends across the planning area, identifies problems and concerns resulting from the current management, and identifies opportunities to manage these lands differently. It also forms the basis for the “No Action” alternative.
Step 5 Formulate Alternatives	During this step, BLM formulates a reasonable range of alternatives for managing resources in the planning area. Alternatives include a continuation of current management (no action) alternative and other alternatives that strive to resolve the major planning issues while emphasizing different management scenarios. Alternatives usually vary by the amounts of resource production or protection that would be allowed, or in the emphasis of one program area over another.
Step 6 Estimation of Effects	This step involves estimating the physical, biological, economic, and social effects of implementing each alternative in order to provide a comparative evaluation of impacts in compliance with CEQ regulations for implementing NEPA (40 CFR 1500).
Step 7 Selection of Preferred Alternative	Based on the information resulting from the estimation of effects, the BLM identifies a Preferred Alternative. The Draft RMP/EIS is then prepared for printing and distributed for a 90 day public review.
Step 8 Selection of RMP	Following review and analysis of public comments on the Draft RMP/EIS, BLM makes adjustments as warranted and selects a proposed RMP. The Proposed RMP and a Final EIS is then published. A final decision is made after a 60-day Governor’s Consistency Review and a 30-day public protest period are completed. BLM then publishes the Record of Decision (ROD) and prepares the Approved Resource Management Plan.
Step 9 Monitoring And Evaluation	This step involves the collection and analysis of resource condition and trend data to determine the effectiveness of the plan in resolving the identified issues and achieving desired results. Implementation of decisions requiring subsequent action is also monitored. Monitoring continues from the time the RMP is adopted until changing conditions require revision of the whole plan or any portion of it.

# SCOPING AND ISSUES

## THE SCOPING PROCESS

Early in the planning process, the public was invited to help the BLM identify planning issues and concerns relating to the management of BLM-administered lands and resources in the planning area. The formal scoping period began with publication of the Notice of Intent (NOI) in the Federal Register in August 2001. The scoping process included five scoping meetings conducted in locations within and outside of the planning area. Brochures were distributed to over 1,000 individuals and organizations. These brochures explained the BLM land use planning process and invited the public to attend meetings or contact the BLM in other ways (for example, via electronic mail or phone) to provide comment. News releases and radio announcements were also used to notify the public of the planning process and how to become involved. Informal scoping may occur throughout the planning process.

See the *Collaboration* section and Chapter 5—Consultation and Coordination for additional information on other public participation opportunities beyond scoping.

## IDENTIFICATION OF ISSUES

Issue identification is the first step of the nine-step BLM planning process. A planning issue is a major controversy or dispute regarding management of resources or uses on the public lands that can be addressed in a variety of ways. During scoping, BLM suggested several broad categories as being major issues that would drive the development of the planning alternatives. BLM asked the public to comment on these categories, and to provide other issues or concerns to be considered in development of the RMP. Analysis of the comments was completed and a Scoping Summary Report finalized in March of 2002 (USDI-BLM 2002a). After consideration of public responses, eight major planning issues were identified. These issues drive the formulation of the plan alternatives and addressing them has resulted in a range of management options presented in four alternatives. While other concerns are addressed in the plan, management related to them may or may not change by alternative.

The eight main planning issues are described below.

## ISSUES ADDRESSED

### Issue 1

*How will riparian and upland vegetation be managed to achieve healthy rangelands and provide for livestock grazing and fish and wildlife habitat?*

The extensive use of the planning area for livestock grazing, coupled with an abundance and diversity of wildlife and 914 miles of riparian/wetland resources drives this planning issue. Concerns about water quality and sage grouse and westslope cutthroat trout habitats (see Issue 4) in particular have further heightened interest in the management of riparian and upland vegetation. As a result, many comments suggested particular guidelines and procedures that should be considered in the planning process.

The Standards for Rangeland Health (USDI-BLM 1996a) developed in cooperation with the Western Montana Resource Advisory Council (RAC) provide the baseline land health standards for the RMP. The RMP establishes objectives for riparian and upland vegetation and identifies a variety of tools that can be applied during activity level planning. Subsequent activity level plans (such as Allotment Management Plans and Watershed Management Plans) will then identify site-specific objectives and management actions to achieve the broader RMP goals and objectives.

### Issue 2

*How will forest and woodland resources be managed for forest health and to manage fuel loads, as well as to provide fish and wildlife habitat and commercial wood products?*

The interest in management of forest and woodland resources in the planning area is high, though less than an estimated 10 percent of the planning area is forested. Local governments, environmental and conservation groups, timber industry interests, and tribal groups hold strong opinions about management actions that should or should not take place in the planning area. Within the range of alternatives, a variety of factors were considered, including age class diversity, biodiversity and the loss of diversity, wildlife security cover and corridors, Wilderness Study Area constraints, special status species, Native American uses, opportunities for economic activity, the local economy, access needs, and fuel loading and the proximity to urban interface areas.

### Issue 3

*How will noxious weeds be controlled on public lands, and what conditions will apply to permitted activities?*

Control of noxious weeds and other invasive species is a critical component of public land management. Scoping comments reflected a range of opinions on appropriate control methods, types of terms and conditions that should be placed public lands users, and the need to manage for invasive species in addition to designated noxious weeds.

The RMP will adopt the North American Weed Management Association inventory and monitoring standards and

policies and strategies detailed in the Montana Weed Management Plan (Duncan 2001). Standard practices or stipulations to minimize spread of noxious weeds, such as required use of certified weed seed free forage for reclamation and restoration treatments will be applied to all resource activities and uses. Limitations on aerial spraying to protect particular resource values are proposed in one alternative, and weed considerations played a role as travel designations were considered.

## Issue 4

***How will sage grouse and westslope cutthroat trout conservation strategies be applied in the planning area and how will they affect other public land uses?***

This issue focuses on species that have been petitioned for consideration as threatened or endangered species but are not yet listed, and are of greatest concern to the public based on scoping comments.

### Westslope Cutthroat Trout

The westslope cutthroat trout (WCT) is listed by the Montana BLM as a “species of special concern.” The Dillon Field Office administers public land that includes habitat occupied by westslope cutthroat trout, with over 104 miles of stream containing populations that are greater than 90% genetically pure. BLM is a signatory to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and Conservation Agreement for Westslope Cutthroat Trout in Montana, dated May 1999. This agreement identifies conservation actions relating to fish management, habitat management, genetics/population management, and administrative needs.

The RMP alternatives identify how BLM will manage habitat to provide for westslope cutthroat trout needs (since BLM is responsible for habitat management rather than population management) and what impacts may occur as management is applied.

### Sage Grouse

While the sage grouse is not listed as a Species of Special Concern on the BLM’s 1996 list, sage grouse have received an increasing amount of attention as populations across the west have declined. It is anticipated sage grouse will become a Species of Special Concern when the BLM list is updated. A management plan and conservation strategies prepared in a partnership effort led by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks and a national plan being prepared by the BLM have been considered in the development of the RMP. Alternatives were developed using measures from the conservation strategies, focusing on BLM habitat management. The impacts of applying these measures are identified.

## Issue 5

***What level of commercial or other authorized use should be allowed in the planning area, and what conditions will be applied to permitted activities?***

Activities of users in the planning area affect both the environment and resources in the planning area, as well as the communities in and around the immediate area and on a regional and national scale. Some of the uses that require authorization in the planning area are livestock grazing, utility transmission and distribution facilities, communication facilities, road right-of-ways, sand and gravel pits, hard rock mineral development, oil and gas leasing and development, research permits, and special recreation use permits (for activities such as commercial outfitting and guiding).

Major factors considered to address this issue and the allocation of public land for certain uses included compliance with BLM policies and guidance, compatibility and conflicts between commercial and non-commercial uses, ability of resources to sustain the activity, standards for rangeland health, reclamation of disturbed lands, impacts to resources, impacts to communities, public health and safety, and social and economic considerations and tradeoffs.

## Issue 6

***Which areas, if any, identified as potential ACECs should be designated and managed as ACECs? How should they be managed to protect the relevant and important values?***

In the Dillon RMP process, over sixty-three nominated areas were reviewed. In order to qualify as potential ACECs, nominated areas must meet relevance and importance criteria that are established in regulation and in BLM guidance. Fourteen (14) of these areas were initially found to meet the criteria as potential ACECs but management actions have been implemented to remove the health and safety threat posed by one area (Thorium City) since the 2002 findings. As a result, 13 potential ACECs have been considered in the RMP. The Western Montana RAC convened a subgroup to assist BLM with review of the nominations for relevance and importance.

Concerns with ACEC designation revolve around limitations that special management might place on current and future uses. Proponents of ACEC designation see it as a way of preventing loss of or impact to values of particular interest.

FLPMA states that priority should be given to the designation and protection of these areas when developing land use plans. A potential ACEC is designated in the approved RMP



if it requires special management to protect its relevant and important values. Management is considered special if it is outside of the ordinary or routine requirements of the BLM or if it is not covered by provisions already stipulated in the RMP; special management is unique to the area and includes terms and conditions specifically designed to protect the values in the ACEC.

In following this guidance, provisions developed for the different alternatives were reviewed to determine if the relevant and important values would be adequately protected. If so, then the potential ACEC was not proposed for designation in that alternative since it did not require “special management”. If the relevant or important values would not be adequately protected by the provisions in an alternative, then the potential ACEC was proposed for designation under that alternative and the provisions that would be considered “special management” were identified. Each of the 13 potential ACECs have been proposed for designation in at least one alternative in accordance with ACEC guidance found in BLM Manual 1613.

## Issue 7

### *Should any eligible rivers be recommended for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers system?*

The approved RMP will determine whether any rivers in the planning area are recommended as suitable for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River system. No suitability findings were deferred. Eight rivers or river segments were recommended as eligible for further consideration in BLM’s land use planning process and assessed as to whether they would be suitable for designation under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968 (USDI-BLM 2002b). These rivers were studied under Section 5(d)(1) of the Act.

Recommendations provided to BLM by the Western Montana RAC were incorporated into the plan alternatives, based on the work of a subgroup convened by the RAC. Factors taken into consideration during the suitability study include ownership of surface and subsurface lands and manageability of the river corridor; uses that would be enhanced, foreclosed, or curtailed; Federal, public, State, tribal, local or other interest; estimated costs of administration; the ability of the BLM to manage a river as Wild and Scenic; whether other mechanisms (besides Wild and Scenic River designation) would protect values; and historic or existing rights which could be affected by designation.

Most concerns about Wild and Scenic River suitability recommendations revolve around the management that might be applied along the rivers, both if the river is designated by Congress and management of the river in the interim. Other concerns related to future opportunities for the public to reconsider rivers that are found not suitable in the RMP plan-

ning process due to changes in support or interest or other factors. As specified in Wild and Scenic River guidance, one of the alternatives finds all of the rivers suitable for inclusion in the national system. Other alternatives adopt recommendations of the Western Montana RAC supplemented by interdisciplinary team discussions. The preferred alternative does not recommend any rivers as suitable for inclusion into the national system.

## Issue 8

### *How should travel be managed to provide access for recreation, commercial uses, and general enjoyment of the public lands while protecting natural and cultural resources?*

Travel and access considerations are of major importance to all users of public lands. Interest in this issue comes from hunters, energy developers, off-highway recreationists, livestock grazers, wilderness advocates, wildlife advocates, landowners with private inholdings, adjacent Federal and State agencies, general recreationists, and tribal interests.

Currently, travel management in the Dillon Field Office is guided by several planning efforts. Travel restrictions are identified on the Southwest Montana Interagency Travel Plan Map. Travel management decisions for the Centennial Valley area were made in January 2001. The Off Highway Vehicle Statewide Record of Decision (ROD) signed in June 2003 limited all travel in the planning area to existing roads and trails in areas that were previously open to cross-country travel by wheeled vehicles. The RMP identifies areas to be managed as open, limited or closed in conjunction with identification of routes open to motorized travel by wheeled vehicles on a yearlong or seasonal basis. This is consistent with guidance issued in Land Use Planning Handbook H-1601-1. The Western Montana RAC convened a subgroup to assist the BLM in the review of routes for designation.

Major factors and considerations in identifying open, closed and limited travel routes in the planning area include the following:

- access needs for energy development
- recreational use needs
- access to areas important to Native Americans
- other commodity and administrative needs
- road densities and habitat fragmentation
- maintenance levels
- fragile soils
- erosion concerns
- protection of resource values
- travel impacts on private land
- access to private inholdings
- adjacent State and Federal ownerships and travel plans
- public health and safety
- conflicts between motorized and non-motorized users



- spread of noxious weeds
- Wilderness Study Areas

The RMP will identify areas or locations where BLM could provide for travel by the public across private or other jurisdictions by obtaining legal access from willing landowners. The RMP will also provide guidelines on the manner in which the BLM would pursue such acquisitions from willing sellers.

## ISSUES BEYOND THE SCOPE OF THE PLAN

During scoping, several concerns were raised that are beyond the scope of this planning effort or represented questions on how the BLM would go about the planning process and implementation. The planning process is described in the *Planning Process* section of this document and the approved RMP will include an implementation and monitoring plan. The issues and concerns beyond the scope of the plan are summarized below and will not be analyzed further for the reasons stated.

### **Address Management Paradigms and Concepts (i.e., Free Market Environmentalism/New Environmentalism/Traditional Environmentalism/ Island biogeography/etc).**

The RMP will not address or advocate any particular paradigm, concept or philosophy regarding the management of public lands. The RMP will provide a range of alternatives to address major planning issues, which as a result may use some of the principles contained in the paradigms mentioned in scoping.

### **Adopt NRCS and MT DNRC grazing standards**

BLM will follow the grazing regulations set forth in 43 CFR 4130 and the subsequent Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing developed in cooperation with the BLM's RAC.

### **Conduct New Comprehensive Inventory of BLM lands**

The scale of inventory necessary at a land use plan level is different than requirements for activity or implementation level projects. The BLM maintains an ongoing inventory of public lands and will use the best available information at an appropriate scale to prepare the RMP. In some instances, additional information was collected or compiled to be used in the plan (for example, road and trail inventory information to assist with travel planning).

### **Diversion of resources from implementation and monitoring of the RMP to firefighting**

This is an administrative issue that will not be addressed in the RMP. The approved plan will have an implementation

plan and will provide a baseline for BLM to identify budget needs and priorities in the annual budgeting process.

### **Hunting and fishing regulations (i.e., implement catch and release only)**

Hunting and fishing activities are regulated by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP). The planning criteria prepared for the plan recognizes the State of Montana's responsibility and authority to regulate hunting and fishing.

### **Identification of Management Indicator Species/ keystone species/key indicator species/umbrella species/key wildlife habitats**

The RMP will identify priority species and habitats in the RMP as specified in BLM planning guidance. BLM's regulations do not require identification of management indicator species.

### **Livestock Disease**

Evidence of transmission of disease between livestock and wildlife is uncertain. However, livestock health is addressed in the grazing regulations. BLM already has the authority to require certain health certifications for domestic livestock on public lands. The potential for such diseases to be transmitted will be considered as a factor when considering the management of public lands for certain species and/or reintroductions. We acknowledge that there may be indirect effects to be discussed in the impact analysis.

### **Wildlife Disease**

Since BLM manages habitat and not wildlife populations, transmission of diseases such as West Nile virus in sage grouse populations or whirling disease in westslope cutthroat trout will not be addressed.

### **Maintain Irrigated Habitat in coordination with Bureau of Reclamation and Army Corps of Engineers**

The RMP will only address management of public lands administered by the BLM's Dillon Field Office, which has very little irrigated habitat.

### **Reintroduction of Large Carnivores and other fish and wildlife species**

BLM manages habitat rather than populations and does not have the authority to determine what species will or should be reintroduced. The RMP may identify areas or parameters to be considered when other agencies propose the reintroduction of species.

### **Bison Recovery, Restoration of Wild Free-Ranging Bison, and Bison Hunting**

Management of animal species and hunting of those species is outside the jurisdiction of BLM and will not be addressed in the RMP. The RMP will not address establishment of a free roaming bison herd across all land ownerships in the Greater Yellowstone Area. The RMP addresses management of lands administered by BLM.

### **Rural cleansing and discrimination of minorities**

The BLM will consider all comments and will not favor any particular interests. Social and economic impacts will be addressed in the RMP, which may indirectly address the public perceptions of rural cleansing and discrimination.

### **Suitability of Livestock Grazing**

The RMP will identify what lands are available and not available for livestock grazing as specified in BLM planning guidance, and provide criteria for how adjustments to these allocations may be made in the future. The RMP will not replace the process that occurs when Standards for Rangeland Health assessments are completed or address issues of non-utilization of particular areas in allotments.

### **Wilderness Study Areas—Get rid of them**

The RMP will not change the recommendations forwarded to Congress by BLM regarding lands under wilderness review. Any Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) included in these recommendations will continue to be managed under the Interim Management Policy until Congress takes action to designate or release those areas. The RMP will address how public lands in WSAs would be managed if they were released. Management of the Tobacco Root Tack-on WSA will be addressed in the plan alternatives since recommendations on the area have not been forwarded to Congress and decisions on adjacent Forest Service lands have been finalized.

### **Wildlife Numbers**

BLM manages habitat, while the State of Montana through FWP determines the appropriate numbers of wildlife. The RMP will not directly address population numbers.

### **Replace Allotment Management Planning with Habitat Management Planning**

BLM regulation and guidance provides for a number of planning provisions subsequent to approval of a broad, comprehensive land use plan. Assessments of public land are currently conducted on a watershed basis to determine whether land health standards are being met, and appropriate adjustments to livestock grazing are made in the allotment management planning process. Allotment Management Plans are provided for under 43 CFR 4120 and will continue to be developed where appropriate. Habitat Management plans are developed in accordance with guidance in BLM Manual 6780 and will continue to be developed where appropriate.

### **Establish Management Areas/Areas of Critical Environmental Concern for Fish and Wildlife regardless of Ownership**

BLM maintains discretion in the planning process to determine how best to present management opportunities across the planning area. Proposed land use allocations and management objectives and actions will not be broken into smaller management areas based on geographic, watershed or other considerations. Areas of Critical Environmental

Concern as defined in FLPMA only include public lands, not other private or agency lands and the Dillon RMP will not deviate from this approach.

### **Issues Addressed by Law or Regulation**

There are several issues raised in scoping that are clearly of concern to the public but which are governed by existing laws and regulations (for example, water quality). Where certain management is already dictated by law or regulation, alternatives have not been developed but management will instead be applied as “Management Common to All Alternatives”.

## **PLANNING CRITERIA AND LEGISLATIVE CONSTRAINTS**

The Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) is the primary authority for BLM’s management of public lands. This law provides the overarching policy by which public lands will be managed and establishes provisions for land use planning, land acquisition and disposition, administration, range management, rights-of-way, designated management areas, and the repeal of certain laws and statutes. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) provides the basic national charter for environmental responsibility and requires the consideration and public availability of information regarding the environmental impacts of major federal actions significantly affecting the quality of the human environment. In concert, these two laws provide the overarching guidance for administration of all BLM activities. Additional laws, regulations, and policies guiding management of public lands are identified in Chapter 3 and **Appendix A** details the provisions of the major laws guiding public land management.

Planning criteria are the standards, rules and guidelines that help to guide data collection, alternative formulation, and alternative selection in the RMP development process. In conjunction with the planning issues, planning criteria assure the planning process is focused. The criteria also help guide the final plan selection and provide a basis for judging the responsiveness of the planning options.

The following criteria were developed by BLM and reviewed by the public as part of the scoping process.

- The principles of multiple use and sustained yield as set forth in the Federal Land Policy and Management Act will be applied in the RMP.
- The RMP will comply with applicable federal and state laws and regulations.

- The RMP will be accompanied by an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that will comply with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) standards.
- RMP decisions will apply to lands in Beaverhead and Madison County under jurisdiction of the Dillon Field Office, including federal mineral estate except that underlying Forest Service, National Park Service, or Fish and Wildlife Service lands. This does not include public lands in Beaverhead County that lie south of the Big Hole River and north of the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest between Wisdom and Divide. These lands are under jurisdiction of the Butte Field Office and will be addressed in the Butte RMP.
- The RMP will primarily rely on available inventories of public lands and their resources.
- Boundaries and recommendations on Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) identified as a result of inventory conducted prior to October 21, 1993 under Section 603 of FLPMA and awaiting action by Congress will not be changed by the RMP.
- Although the formal Section 603(a) wilderness review process was determined to have expired on October 21, 1993, BLM may and will continue to inventory public lands for resource values including wilderness characteristics on lands that have not been reviewed, or where new information is provided that shows additional inventory is necessary. However, additional Wilderness Study Areas will not be designated.
- Information from the landscape analyses conducted for the Gravelly and Pioneer Mountains will be used in development of the RMP.
- The RMP will incorporate the Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing as set out by the RAC.
- The RMP will consider provisions of the Montana/Dakotas Statewide Fire Management Plan.
- The RMP will adopt the provisions of The Montana Weed Management Plan approved in January 2001.
- The RMP will incorporate decisions approved in January 2001 regarding travel management in the southern portion of the Centennial Valley.
- The RMP will consider the existing recovery plans and management strategies and guidelines in place for federally listed threatened and endangered species which utilize the planning area. State management plans will be considered for delisted species.
- The RMP will consider conservation and management strategies developed for protection, conservation, and restoration of westslope cutthroat trout, fluvial arctic grayling and sage grouse.
- The RMP will recognize the State of Montana's responsibility to manage fish and wildlife populations, including hunting and fishing uses.
- The RMP will recognize the State of Montana's authority regarding Montana water law and water rights.
- RMP decisions will be compatible to the extent possible with the plans and mandates of other agencies and governments that have jurisdiction in the region.
- The RMP will recognize federal land management agency obligations under applicable tribal treaties and laws or executive orders relating to Native American reserved rights, religious freedoms, and traditional use areas.
- The RMP will consider and integrate local, Statewide and national interests.
- Actions proposed by the RMP will be achievable given technological, budget and staffing limits.

## RELATED PLANS

### PLAN CONSISTENCY

BLM planning regulations require that BLM plans be consistent with officially approved or adopted resource related plans of other federal, state, local and tribal governments to the extent those plans are consistent with Federal laws and regulations applicable to public lands. Plans formulated by federal, state, local and tribal governments that relate to management of lands and resources have been reviewed and considered as the RMP/EIS has been developed.

Management of federal and state lands immediately adjacent to public land administered by the BLM was considered in the formulation of alternative management scenarios and land use allocations. As Cooperating Agencies in development of the Dillon RMP, Beaverhead and Madison County have considered consistency with appropriate county plans as the Draft RMP/EIS has been developed. The main major planning documents of other federal, state, local, and tribal governments considered in development of the RMP include:

- Forest Plan—Beaverhead National Forest (USDA-FS 1986; currently under revision)

- Forest Plan—Deerlodge National Forest (USDA-FS 1987; currently under revision)
- Beaverhead Riparian Plan amendment (USDA-FS 1997a)
- Beaverhead Forest O&G EIS (USDA-FS 1995)
- Targhee National Forest Plan (USDA-FS 1997b)
- Beaverhead County Comprehensive Plan, Update. Growth policy, current conditions, and trends (Beaverhead County Planning Board 2000)
- Beaverhead County Resource Use Plan (Beaverhead County 2001)
- Madison County Comprehensive Plan (Madison County Planning Board 1999)
- Madison County Growth Policy (Madison County Planning Board 2001)
- Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan (USDI-FWS 1993)
- Northern Rocky Mountain Wolf Recovery Plan (USDI-FWS 1987)
- Whooping Crane Recovery Plan (USDI-FWS 1994a)
- Montana Bald Eagle Management Plan (USDI-BOR 1994)
- Pacific Bald Eagle Recovery Plan (USDI-FWS 1986)
- Western Regional Corridor Study (Clayton and Associates 1993)
- Mountain-Foothills Grazing EIS (USDI-BLM 1980)
- Centennial Mountains Wilderness Suitability Study/MFP Amendment EIS (USDI-BLM 1990)
- Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management for Montana, North Dakota and South Dakota (USDI-BLM 1996a)
- Final Off-Highway Vehicle Environmental Impact Statement and Plan Amendment for Montana, North Dakota and Portions of South Dakota (USDI-BLM and USDA-FS 2001a, Record of Decision issued June 2003)

### **Other National, Statewide, and Field Office Plans**

- Vegetation Treatment on BLM Lands in Thirteen Western States (USDI BLM 1991a)
- The Montana Weed Management Plan (Duncan 2001)
- Northwest Area Noxious Weed Control Program Final Environmental Impact Statement (USDI-BLM 1985)
- Montana Statewide Wilderness Study Report (USDI-BLM 1991b)
- Oil and Gas Environmental Assessment of BLM Leasing Program, Butte District (USDI-BLM 1981a)
- Final Off Road Vehicle Designations, Butte District, Dillon Resource Area (USDI-BLM 1981b)
- Final Wilderness Environmental Impact Statement for the Dillon Resource Area (USDI-BLM 1987a)
- Dillon Resource Area—Butte District Public Land Adjustment Programmatic Environmental Assessment (USDI-BLM 1983a)
- Lee Metcalf Wilderness Fire Management Guidebook (USDA-FS and USDI-BLM 1997)
- Assessing the Potential for Renewable Energy on Federal Lands (USDI-BLM and US DOE 2003)
- Bear Trap Canyon Wilderness Management Plan (USDI-BLM 1984a)
- Lower Big Hole River Recreation Area Management Plan (USDI-BLM 1987b)
- Lower Madison River Recreation Area Management Plan (USDI-BLM 2003a)
- Centennial Mountains Travel Management Plan (USDI-BLM 2001a)
- National Fire Plan and 2001 Federal Fire Policy
- Fire/Fuels Management Plan Environmental Assessment/Plan Amendment for Montana and the Dakotas (USDI-BLM 2003b)
- Draft National BLM Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Strategy (USDI-BLM 2003c)

### **Other Pertinent Analyses**

- Gravelly Mountains Landscape Analyses (USDA-FS and USDI-BLM 1999)
- Pioneers Mountains Landscape Analyses (USDA-FS and USDI-BLM 1998)

During development of the plan, these documents were consulted and considered as alternatives were developed. Management actions identified in the alternatives are not known to be inconsistent with other federal, state, local and tribal planning documents. All federal, state and local agencies and tribal councils have been requested to review this document and inform the BLM of any inconsistencies.

## **RELATIONSHIP OF THE RMP TO BLM POLICIES, PLANS AND PROGRAMS**

A number of plans have been developed by the BLM that relate to or otherwise govern management in the planning area. Some of these plans amended the MFP while others, though they have not been formally adopted through the land use planning process, are considered by BLM when implementation level planning is conducted or other specific actions are analyzed. These major plans and other major management guidance are listed below by category and provide a perspective of the many management considerations pertinent to the planning area. Major laws and program policy and guidance pertinent to each resource and program area are listed at the beginning of each section in Chapter 3.

### **Land Use Plans and Amendments**

- Dillon Management Framework Plan (USDI-BLM 1979)



## POLICY

No proclamations or legislative designations that would influence decisions or constrain the alternatives have been issued within the planning area, with the exception of the designation of the Bear Trap Wilderness in 1964.

In response to BLM's preparation of an oil and gas leasing amendment to the MFP initiated in 1998, the Gallatin Wildlife Association and National Wildlife Federation filed a complaint in U.S. District Court in April 2000 alleging failure on the BLM's part to follow the provisions of FLPMA to prepare an RMP and designate ACECs. In October 2000, a settlement agreement was reached between all parties to initiate a comprehensive RMP planning effort rather than update the existing Management Framework Plan with a series of amendments.

## COLLABORATION

In March of 2001, the BLM Dillon Field Office cooperated in an assessment led by the Montana Consensus Council (MCC) through a grant with the Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution. The assessment was designed to ask citizens how they would like to participate in the development of the RMP and what strategies might assist them in becoming involved. After a series of written surveys, interviews and validation meetings, MCC provided recommendations to BLM in August 2001. As a result, BLM worked with the MCC to establish issue-based subgroups convened under the Western Montana Resource RAC. The intent was to convene working groups using consensus decision making and collaborative problem solving to address some of the more controversial planning decisions to be made. The issue-based subgroups formed as a result of the public participation assessment and subsequent RAC topic selection focused on importance and relevance recommendations on ACEC nominations, recommendations on the suitability of eight (8) rivers or river segments found eligible under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, and recommendations on travel management. More detailed information on the subgroups convened under the RAC is provided in Chapter 5.

In addition to issue-based subgroups, BLM also worked with a Coordinating Committee established by the MCC to identify additional public involvement opportunities. The Coordinating Committee of citizens established by the MCC provided suggestions to BLM on strategies to increase public involvement and understanding of the planning process. This committee supported the concept of an Information Fair to provide the public with information to be used in development of the plan, as this was raised as a concern during the assessment process conducted in early 2001. Implementing recommendations made by this committee was seen as an avenue to increase involvement in the RMP process since

members of the committee would encourage participation of their constituents in development of the plan. A list of the public involvement opportunities and outreach conducted to date can be found in **Appendix B**.

## INTERGOVERNMENTAL, INTERAGENCY AND TRIBAL RELATIONSHIPS

As part of an extensive outreach effort at the start of the planning process, a number of discussions with federal, state, local and tribal representatives were initiated. Local government officials from Beaverhead County were interested in becoming a cooperating agency in the development of the Dillon RMP. As a result, the BLM and Beaverhead County established a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) identifying Beaverhead County as a Cooperating Agency and outlining the special expertise the county could bring to the planning process. Madison County was also invited to be a Cooperating Agency early in the process and at the beginning, determined that ongoing interagency coordination meetings were adequate to stay informed of BLM's progress in RMP development. However, Madison County signed an MOU to join Beaverhead County as a local government cooperator in the RMP in November 2002.

Invitations were also sent to other state, federal and tribal government representatives regarding the RMP process with an invitation to discuss the best avenue for involvement by the agency in the planning process. While none of these invitations or subsequent conversations resulted in additional formal Cooperating Agencies, information sharing and networking has occurred with these government interests in order to consider a number of concerns and suggestions on various aspects of the plan. In addition, the Bureau of Reclamation and the Agricultural Research Service retain special interest in this planning process, as decisions will be made for federal mineral estate lying beneath surface estate under their administration.

Consultation meetings specific to the initiation of the Dillon RMP/EIS were held with representatives from the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes and the Confederated Tribes of the Kootenai-Salish. Members of both of these tribal entities have known interests in public lands in the Dillon Field Office.

## OTHER STAKEHOLDER RELATIONSHIPS

The Dillon RMP effort has sought involvement in the planning process from a variety of stakeholders outside of government and agency groups. Scoping comments were re-

ceived from a number of individuals and organizations representing a wide range of interests, including but not limited to advocacy groups for wildlife, oil and gas, livestock grazing and agriculture, rockhounding, motorized recreation, wilderness, commercial outfitting, and scenic trails. Stakeholders are kept informed of progress on the plan and opportunities to become involved or learn more about the process through the *Update* newsletter and press releases to local and regional media. In addition, many of these stakeholder groups have found representation on the subgroups convened by the Western Montana RAC to work on specific planning issues.

## OVERALL VISION

Comments received during scoping represented a broad range of desires expressed by both individuals and organizations. These same desires were expressed by the planning team during discussion of the overarching vision for management of public lands in the planning area. As a result, the following vision statements were developed to provide overall direction for the planning process.

Within the capability of the resources:

- Sustain and where necessary restore the health and diversity of forest, rangeland, aquatic, and riparian ecosystems,
- Support a sustainable flow of benefits in consideration of the social and economic systems of southwest Montana, and
- Provide diverse recreational and educational opportunities.